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ABSTRACT

Presenting 12 standards by which school districts can document evidence of a well-planned comprehensive reading program, this publication can also be used as a guideline for identification of promising practices, assessment of current programs, development of long-range goals and program plans, planning inservice and staff development programs, and disseminating information. Each standard includes a rating scale, keyed as follows: (1) not started, (2) started/little progress, (3) some progress, (4) significant progress, (5) satisfactorily achieved. (FL)

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CRITERIA OF EXCELLENCE FOR SCHOOL READING PROGRAMS

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FOREWORD

This guide for use by administrators and school personnel in Texas schools offers suggestions for assessing and planning comprehensive reading programs. Recognized authorities in administration, needs assessment, and program planning have worked with the staff of the Texas Education Agency to identify the elements of a quality reading program.

We hope this publication will provide assistance in giving school administrators and personnel information they will need for improving reading instruction for students.

M. L. Brockette

INTRODUCTION

The Criteria of Excellence for School Reading Programs presents standards by which school districts can document evidence of a well-planned comprehensive reading program. The publication can also be used as a guideline for:

- identification of promising practices
- assessment of the current program
- development of long-range goals and program plans
- planning inservice and staff development programs
- disseminating information

The Criteria of Excellence was developed by administrators, supervisors, and teachers cooperating in the Texas Right to Read Effort. The document has been piloted in Right to Read school districts as a guide in conducting needs assessments and in developing plans for implementing improved reading programs. Although the program in each district will vary in degrees of achievement, a comprehensive program will reflect all criteria.

Each criterion has its own descriptors suggested as indicators which should measure the degree to which each of the 12 standards is being met. Local school districts may add other indicators as descriptors. The scales following each indicator are rated 1 to 5. The key is:

1. Not started
2. Started/little progress
3. Some progress
4. Significant progress
5. Satisfactorily achieved

CRITERIA OF EXCELLENCE

1. There is a coordination of all the administrative facets of the reading program as evidenced by the following:

   - A local education agency reading director is responsible for the coordination of the program throughout all the administrative units of the school system.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - A reading committee with representatives of all administrative units of the educational program in the community has the responsibility to plan, coordinate, and articulate the total program.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - A comprehensive plan for the total reading program includes a defined reading curriculum that is made available to the public.

     1 2 3 4 5

2. There is community support of the reading program as evidenced by both:

   - financial resources

     1 2 3 4 5

   - human resources

     1 2 3 4 5

3. There is an adequate staff with diversified specialists who possess appropriate levels of professional competencies as evidenced by the following:

   - Elementary teachers assigned to self-contained classrooms have competencies in teaching the language arts.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Reading teachers in departmentalized organizations at all levels demonstrate skills in the teaching of reading.

     1 2 3 4 5

- English language arts teachers have competencies in the teaching of reading.

1 2 3 4 5

- Content area teachers at all levels have the necessary training to teach those skills essential to the effective reading of their own instructional materials.

1 2 3 4 5

- Reading supervisors have competencies in supervision and hold the Reading Specialist's Certificate or are engaged in obtaining it.

1 2 3 4 5

- Teacher aides and noncertified staff members have received adequate training for their assigned tasks.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There is a continuous program of staff development, as evidenced by the following:

- inservice programs for certified teachers, noncertified staff, and volunteer reading helpers include:

  - leadership training provided for Right to Read directors by the Texas Education Agency

1 2 3 4 5

  - programs sponsored by the regional education service center

1 2 3 4 5

  - local programs conducted by the reading director for teachers assigned to reading

1 2 3 4 5

- School representatives attend conferences such as those sponsored by the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Association for the Improvement of Reading, and the Texas Council of the International Reading Association.

1 2 3 4 5

- A professional library is available for both teachers and parents to keep abreast of current trends, research findings, and alternative approaches to teaching.

1 2 3 4 5

- Representatives of the local education agency visit demonstration sites that have implemented exemplary reading practices.

1 2 3 4 5

- Local reading teachers visit promising programs within the school system.

1 2 3 4 5

5. There is a positive climate for learning for all students, evidenced by the following:

- Positive attitudes are held by all staff members toward the development of student self-concept and appreciation of his or her own cultural background and of different cultural backgrounds of other students.

1 2 3 4 5

- Adequate time for reading instruction is scheduled in the school program at all levels.

1 2 3 4 5

- Resources to support the reading program are budgeted well in advance, and needed materials and other resources are easily obtained.

1 2 3 4 5

6. There is a scope and sequence of reading skills as a part of the total communication process to guide instruction of the students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade and adult life, as evidenced by the following:

- A clearly outlined kindergarten program defines prereading skills.

1 2 3 4 5

- A developmental program continues through the secondary grades.

1 2 3 4 5

- The total plan includes an adult education component.

  1 2 3 4 5

- A defined curriculum provides for students to proceed along a continuum to preclude gaps or omissions and to provide for flexibility for adjusting instruction for slower-paced students as well as for gifted and/or high-achieving students.

  1 2 3 4 5

- The language arts program is integrated, with each component supporting other components such as:

  - speaking related to reading

    1 2 3 4 5

  - comprehension taught as thinking skills in both listening and reading

    1 2 3 4 5

7. There are written plans for use of instructional strategies and methodologies to bring about all students' mastery of the identified content as evidenced by the following:

   - Instruction is individualized based upon the assessment of each student's ability and interests.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Plans are organized for individual tutoring, small-group instruction, and large-group instruction for appropriate concept development.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - A variety of instructional techniques is used in adjusting instruction to the needs of students.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - A plan for adjusting instruction for students with various language and cultural differences includes preparatory language activity for bilingual students and for students with different experiential backgrounds.

     1 2 3 4 5

8. There is a continuously-revised student personnel information system with diagnostic information on the student's activities, achievement levels, interests and aspirations, cultural influences, and general backgrounds, as measured by the following:

   - Criterion-referenced instruments test the curricular elements previously taught.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Achievement is recorded by elements mastered and tested. A record is made of skills which need to be taught to each student.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Interest inventories are administered and data on each student are recorded.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - General background information is updated and considered a part of the record system.

     1 2 3 4 5

9. Appropriate ancillary services are provided to ensure that the student is in the best possible frame of mind and body for learning as evidenced by the following:

   - Counseling services are provided in an effort to keep all students in the mainstream of education without labeling them.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Health screening is provided and appropriate referral is made.

     1 2 3 4 5

   - Nutritional services are provided where appropriate.

     1 2 3 4 5

10. A broad range of library services and ample current instructional materials and equipment are provided:

    - Audiovisual materials in both classrooms and resource rooms are appropriate to accommodate the varying learning styles of the student population.

      1 2 3 4 5

- Collections of carefully selected materials satisfy the varying interests and abilities of the students.

1 2 3 4 5

- Alternative textbooks appropriate to the instructional level of the students using them are provided. Textbooks should be selected upon the basis of an appropriate readability formula and the instructional level of the student.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Physical facilities for conducting reading instruction make possible the development of creative teaching ideas that meet the needs of all segments of the school population, including team teaching, flexible grouping, individualized instruction, and laboratories.

12. Provision is made for evaluation of the reading program:

- Student strengths and weaknesses are continuously assessed by criterion-referenced measures recorded in written form and reported to parents, students, and school administrators.

1 2 3 4 5

- Staff and personnel are systematically assigned to the reading program and related areas.

1 2 3 4 5

- Teachers and staff are included in the planning procedures for staff development.

1 2 3 4 5

- Procedures exist for making possible the application of research findings and the introduction of promising practices and instructional materials.

1 2 3 4 5

- Written instructional guides, which are continuously reviewed and updated, display plans for the reading program.

1 2 3 4 5

COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972; AND THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and/or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.